

# **EXHIBIT 3**

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## **Liz Gutfahr says office needs new leadership**

By Hank Stephenson  
For the Nogales International  
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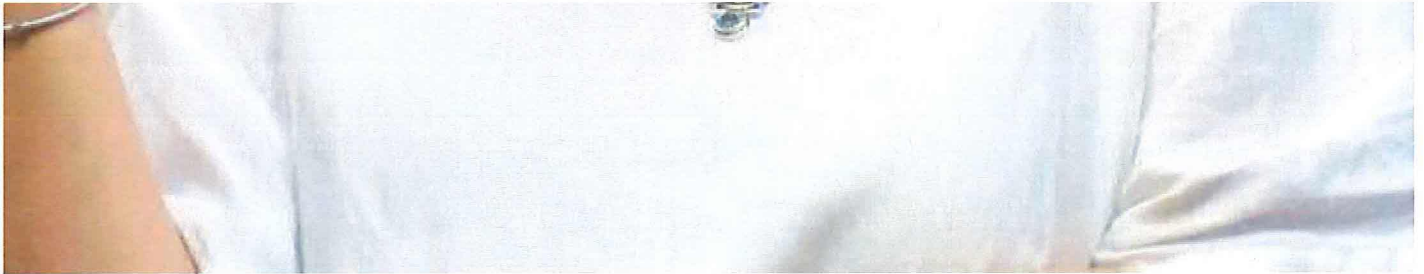


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Liz Gutfahr

JORGE BALDERRAMA

After a 30-year career at Rio Rico Properties, Elizabeth Gutfahr felt it was time for a change. And after seeing Treasurer Caesar Ramirez get suspended from the job, she felt the treasurer's office needed a change, too.

So Gutfahr decided to toss her hat into the political arena and run her first campaign for elected office as the Santa Cruz County treasurer.

Gutfahr says her experience in real estate makes her a good fit for the job that includes being the fiscal custodian of the county and collecting and investing property taxes.

And although she doesn't have much political experience, she doesn't see that as a handicap.

Through her work in the corporate world, she said, she wants to bring a new perspective and a get-it-done attitude to the office.

"It might be different," she said. "But I do land development, accounting, customer service, I work with real estate taxes and property management and I already have established a good working relationship with most of the county departments."

If elected, she hopes to do a lot of things differently – starting with getting along with the board of supervisors and turning reports in on time so she doesn't end up in the same situation as Ramirez.

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Gutfahr said she thinks the board of supervisors handled the situation with Ramirez in a fair way, by giving him plenty of opportunity to right his ship and only suspending him after more than a year of warnings. She says that in the business world that she worked in, Ramirez would have been fired long ago for the same type of infractions.

“I don’t think I would be in his shoes,” she said. “But if I were in his shoes, I would have worked weekends, nights, whatever, to get those reports done and hand them in and make the board happy – and not only the board, but the taxpayers.”

Gutfahr said she hopes voters in the Aug. 28 Democratic primary election will give her the opportunity to make what she sees as some much needed changes to the office, starting with little things like making the office more accessible and revamping the outdated website.

Like Ramirez, she would like to make it possible for people to pay taxes online, and to set up payment plans for delinquent taxpayers. She also wants to add a frequently asked questions page to the website and maintain an updated list of properties for sale, like they have at Rio Rico Properties.

“I want to make it easier for busy taxpayers that don’t have the time to come in, or just want to be able to go online and do it,” she says.

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Another top priority is to review the current investments with a team of financial consultants and then create a new investment plan for the county to make sure they are getting the best results possible.

### **Find a solution**

Gutfahr's connection with Rio Rico Properties, a subsidiary of the Florida-based development company Avatar, has some people wondering where her loyalties lie. Before Rio Rico Properties sold about 2,400 properties in Rio Rico to a company called Vatore, they placed deed restrictions on the land so that it could not be developed. Now Vatore owes an estimated \$6.5 million for unpaid taxes on the land, which they say they cannot pay because the land isn't worth much with the restrictions in place, and Rio Rico Properties won't lift the restrictions.

The episode has county officials stirring over how to collect the debt, and the board of supervisors is considering taking the matter to court.

But Gutfahr says she isn't responsible for the decisions that Rio Rico Properties' corporate bosses made, and anyway, she promised to quit her job if elected, and sever all ties to the real estate industry.

"I want to collect those taxes," she says. "So if elected treasurer, then I think I have a better opportunity to look into this issue from a different side, from a different angle.

I know that the county has looked into it, and I don't think they've found a solution, but I would find ways to find a solution."



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She says that being treasurer would be her first priority, and that means she would have no job, stocks or other interests in any real estate company, including shuttering the small business she recently started, Rio Rico Consulting and Real Estate.

“I will commit to being treasurer, that’s it,” she says. “I will not sell real estate, I will cut all ties... I believe being treasurer is a full-time job.”

#### **Liz Gutfahr**

- Residence: Rio Rico
- Age: 50
- Family: Husband, David; son Davian
- Education: Nogales High School, Class of 1979; real estate broker’s license
- Recent employment: Rio Rico Properties Inc. (30 Years)
- Previous experience in public office: Served on the Santa Cruz Valley School District No. 35 governing board

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- Professional/community organizations: Currently serves on the Most Holy Nativity Catholic Church Council and Building Committee; Rotary member; co-founder and president of the Rio Rico Women's Association